

the coast at prices that make our inland area competitive again will hinder our competitiveness.

The truck traffic necessary to handle the materials once shipped by barge will put an undue burden on our small towns. Truck congestion will create huge safety problems not only in the towns, but on the roads as well. If new highways are built to accommodate the truck traffic, then a large part of the tourist trade will be lost to the local communities. The time period alone, necessary to bring the existing highway up to meet the heavy loads that will be created will take several years and millions of dollars.

The power boat industry that has grown as a result of the pools along the snake brings in additional sources of revenues to the local economy. Fuel, food supplies, fishing equipment, and supplies and all the other items that are used in utilizing the river facilities all add to the health and vitality of local communities.

We find the statements that have been made, saying that millions of recreational dollars will be generated in southeastern Washington as a result of the dam breaching, very difficult to comprehend. It is our belief that very limited use will be made of the river, once it is back to its original flow rates. That fact that by your own estimates, it will take six to ten years before the behind the dams will be gone, before the water quality will be able to sustain fish, makes us wonder just how the salmon will be greatly improved by this decision, not to mention the loss of resident fish populations. Historically, the river before the dams was not really conducive to white water rafting or pleasure boating.

On February 17, 200, the Union-Bulletin paper of Walla Walla had a very fine editorial on dam breaching. This article is attached to our letter. It says as well as anyone, why we should not breach the four Snake River Dams.

In closing, we strongly support the position that the dams should not be breached; that modification to the dams to enhance the passage of salmon is emphasized; that improvements in the barging and hatcheries be made; and that encouragement and incentives to address local stream habitats be continued or even increased.

We thank you for giving us this opportunity to express our concerns to this important matter now facing us.



*Historical Courthouse  
Built 1887*

## *Columbia County Board of Commissioners*

341 E. Main  
Dayton, Washington 99328  
(509) 382-4542

February 22, 2000

TO: US Army Corps of Engineers

FROM: Columbia County Board of Commissioners

SUBJECT: Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon  
Migration Draft Feasibility Report/EIS

As County Commissioners for Columbia County, a county that will be directly impacted by the decisions made on the four Snake River Dams, we feel it is important for you to understand the social and economic impact our county residents will face.

Columbia County's economy is based on the natural resources of our area. Dry land farming with a small amount of irrigation, livestock production, and timber, followed by recreation and tourism in recent years are our economic mainstays.

The removal of these dams will have a significant negative impact to our county, with what appears to us as no guarantee that the salmon will return in significant numbers to warrant these hardships. The added costs to our farmers to ship their commodities will greatly reduce their ability to be competitive in the world market place. Receiving goods and services from

---

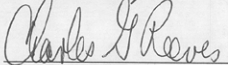
District 1  
*James L. Nelson*

District 2  
*Richard W. Jones*

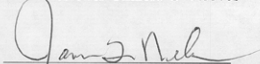
District 3  
*Charles G. Reeves*



Chairman Richard W. Jones



Commissioner Charles G. Reeves



Commissioner James L. Nelson

WALLA WALLA  
UNION-BULLETINFrank A. Biethen  
Chairman of the BoardH. Mason Sizemore  
President

Deborah D. Frol, Publisher

Rick Doyle  
EditorRick Eskil  
Editorial Page EditorThomas P. Skeen  
News EditorNorma Austin  
Human Resources ManagerKen Hatch  
Financial & Technology ManagerJim Crowl  
Circulation ManagerJohn Partlow  
Production Manager/Press

## Our Opinion

Don't breach  
four dams on  
Snake River

**L**ike water allowed to spill over the Ice Harbor Dam, the debate over dam removal along the Snake River is churning.

But, aside from creating a lot of fury and mist, little is being accomplished.

Today a public hearing on dam breaching is taking place in Pasco. The testimony will be as predictable as it is emotional. A variety of positions on the issues have been staked out by a number of groups. For many, the key issue is saving salmon and restoring the river to a more natural state.

The reality, however, is that the clock can't be turned backward. The Snake River will never be as it was before the dams were constructed, just as the buffalo will never roam unrestricted across the Great Plains again. Man has changed the environment.

To this point, we have waited for science to guide us on whether breaching the four Snake River dams is good public policy.

But it has become clear, particularly in the wake of the U.S. Corps of Engineers

\$20 million, 4,000-page study of the issue, that science will not yield conclusive answers. The Corps study gave no specific recommendation on whether the dams should, or should not, be breached.

"It's a major disappointment the report doesn't recommend an option," said Bruce Lovelin, executive director of the Columbia River Alliance, a river-users group. Lovelin's comments came just after the study was released in December.

"The reason, though, that there's no preferred alternative is because the federal agencies are uncertain of the benefits of dam breaching," he said.

And that is a point that has to constantly be juxtaposed against the testimony heard in Pasco and the other hearings taking place in the Northwest in February and March.

Nobody can say with any degree of certainty whether breaching the dams will save salmon. At best, breaching the dam is seen as the best hope for salmon.

What then? The salmon must still navigate the Columbia and its dams. Will those dams have to fall? If so, what about fishing? While some restrictions could be imposed in the U.S., nothing can be done to limit fishing in the ocean by the Japanese, Russians or others.

The desire to remove the Snake River dams is built on hope, which stems from a host of what-if scenarios.

Given the devastating impact breaching dams would have on Eastern Washington and the entire Pacific Northwest, it is not a gamble worth taking.

The Corps' report estimated that breaching dams could impact commercial shipping and increase transportation costs by approximately \$24 million annually. It will increase truck traffic on the roadways, creating dangers as well as boosting wear on the infrastructure.

The loss of irrigation would reduce the value of farmland by \$134 million. The loss of hydropower could result in increased costs of \$251 million to \$291 million annually.

The ripple effect through the region's economy would be extremely painful — and all for little, or perhaps no, gain in bringing the salmon back.

Science has been looked to in this debate and it can't give us a clear answer. Nor is there a likelihood it will in the future.

And that makes the answer clear: Snake River dams should not be breached!